



IN MEMORIAM: LARS VON HAARTMAN, 1919–1998

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Professor Baron Lars Arvid Axel von Haartman passed away in Helsinki on 28 October 1998 in his 80th year. He was born on 24 March 1919 (exactly 60 years after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*) at the family manor Lempisaari in Askainen, 32 km west of Turku, Finland. His ancestors belonged to the Swedish-speaking Finnish nobility; in the middle of the 19th century, his great-grandfather, Lars Gabriel von Haartman, was the most influential person in Finland and the Finnish counselor at the Russian court. Lars A.A. von Haartman, or LvH as he was called by friends and colleagues in Finland, became a Corresponding Fellow of the AOU in 1954 and an Honorary Fellow in 1963.

As a student, LvH was influenced by Margaret Morse Nice's studies on the Song Sparrow, published first in German in 1933 and 1934, and then by David Lack's studies on the behavior of the European Robin in 1939 and 1940. In 1941, LvH began his lifelong studies of color-banded Pied Flycatchers breeding at his estate. In his first detailed study (*Acta Zoologica Fennica* 56:1–104, 1949), LvH stated (in German): "To study the biology of a bird species three things, I think, are necessary: a telescope, colour bands, and diligence." He also worked on many other bird species and especially on general problems such as biology of coastal birds (doctoral thesis in 1945), adaptations to hole nesting (*Evolution* 11:339–347, 1957), clutch size and polygamy, territoriality, bird migration, population dynamics (*Avian Biology* 1:391–459, 1971), and changes in the Finnish avifauna. LvH was eager to gather details of birds' lives, but he also had an exceptional ability to see the central features and factors, to synthesize. He started a nest-card project in Finland in the early 1950s, ran it for decades, and sorted and analyzed tens of thousands of nest cards by hand!

As a result, he published "The Nesting Habits of Finnish Birds. I. Passeriformes" (*Commentationes Biologicae Societas Scientiarum Fennica* 32: 1–187, 1969). The same material was also used in a new handbook "The Birds of the North I–II 1963 to 1972" (in Finnish), for which LvH wrote the chapters titled "Breeding" and "Behavior."

LvH became a Professor of Zoology at the University of Helsinki in 1968. From 1963 to 1969, he was chairman of the Finnish Ornithological Society, and from 1972 to 1976, he was Editor-in-Chief of *Ornis Fennica*. He was Secretary-General of the 12th International Ornithological Congress held in Helsinki in 1958, Vice-President of the 17th Congress in Berlin in 1978, and President of the 18th Congress in Moscow in 1982, therein serving as an important connection between Eastern and Western ornithologists. An issue of *Ornis Fennica* (no. 56[2–3], 1979) was dedicated to him to celebrate his 60th birthday and provides additional information about his work.

As a polyglot (besides his native Swedish, he was fluent in Finnish, English, and German and knew some French) and cultured person, LvH was Finnish ornithology's best ambassador. He had a wonderful dry British sense of humor and often included subtle offhanded comments in his lectures and conversations that were much appreciated by those who were listening.

Not only was LvH the leading star of Finnish ornithology for decades, but he resembled bright Jupiter in his own nocturnal charcoal drawing entitled "Way to Lempisaari, Jupiter." His other passionate interests were literature and art. A many-faceted personality, artist, art connoisseur, art critic, painter and drawer, essayist, poet, and bibliophile, LvH could equally well have become a writer or a professor in art

or the history of literature. He published four collections of poetry, two of which have been translated into English. The last collection (1990) was named *In Memoriam*. Below is a poem entitled "Autumn's Joy" from the collection *Black Sails* (Svarta segel, 1969), which was

translated from Swedish by Doris Huestis Speirs in 1976:

"Strange is the joy of autumn,—
a marine-blue wind, a birch's
nerve-fine branch in light. The eye smiles
but the song of the heart is smoke."

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IN MEMORIAM: BISWAMOY BISWAS, 1923–1994

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With the death in Calcutta of Biswamoy Biswas on 10 August 1994, India lost its foremost bird taxonomist. Born there on 2 June 1923, son of a professor of geology, Biswas was a brilliant student and gold medallist at his graduation. S. L. Hora, director of the Zoological Survey of India, recognized his promise and in 1947 awarded him a three-year fellowship. This allowed Biswas to study at the British Museum in London and with Stresemann in Berlin, but mostly at the American Museum in New York where he worked with me. He was an indefatigable worker, often staying in the museum far into the night after everyone else had gone home. The results were numerous clarifications in our understanding of Indian genera of birds, including *Psittacula* and *Lanius*.

On his return from abroad, Biswas obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Calcutta (1952) and took charge of the Bird and Mammal Section of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). Later, until retirement in 1981, he was Joint Director of the ZSI, and then Emeritus Scientist until 1986. A member of the AOU from 1948, he was elected a Corresponding Fellow in 1953.

Having adopted a modern genus concept, Biswas published in 1953 *A Check-list of Genera of Indian Birds*, the basis of all future taxonomic papers for the subcontinent. He also published on avian anatomy, particularly the vascular system, and on mammalian taxonomy. Of greater importance, he wrote the fundamental

12-part *The Birds of Nepal* (1960–1967), and, jointly with Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley, *The Birds of Bhutan* (1995).

A born naturalist and conservationist, Biswas spent as much time as possible in the field, visiting every state in central and northern India. He helped establish the Salt Lakes and Narendrapur wildlife sanctuaries near Calcutta. He was a member from 1958 of the International Ornithological Committee that directs the International Ornithological Congresses, and he also attended congresses of the International Council for Bird Preservation. For years he edited the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of Calcutta*. The Asiatic Society awarded him the Joy Govinda Law Memorial Medallion in 1975. A new genus of flying squirrel, *Biswamoypterus*, has been named in his honor.

His associates believe his greatest contribution was as a teacher. Numerous students obtained their Ph.D. under his supervision; he infected all of them with his enthusiasm and taught them the critical and meticulous approach that characterized his own work. A lifelong bachelor with a retiring, almost shy personality, he nevertheless made many friends during his years abroad. He lived frugally and donated most of his savings to charity. In all respects, he was an admirable human being.

A longer memorial, with portrait and partial bibliography, appeared in *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 92:397–402 in 1995.